


COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 15, 2006 (BOS Mtg. 3/7/06)

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: James O. McReynolds, County Administrator 

SUBJECT: Proposed Virginia Byway Designation

INTRODUCTION

In connection with its development plans for the Lee Hall/Endview area, the City of Newport News has developed a proposal to request that the state establish a scenic Virginia Byway designation along a corridor stretching from the Lee Hall area to historic Yorktown, including segments of Yorktown Road (Route 238) and Crafford Road in Newport News and, in the County, Crawford Road and segments of Goosley and Cook Roads. Since much of this corridor is within York County, the City has asked the County to consider joining in this request for Virginia Byway designation.

BACKGROUND

Virginia Byways are existing roads with significant aesthetic and cultural values, leading to or lying within an area of historical, natural, or recreational significance. Section 33.1-62 of the Code of Virginia authorizes the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to designate any highway in Virginia as a "Virginia Byway." The purpose of the Virginia Byway program is to identify and promote road corridors containing aesthetic or cultural value near areas of historical, natural, or recreational significance, as well as encouraging travel away from high-traffic corridors. Designated corridors become a part of the Commonwealth's coordinated promotional strategy for Virginia tourism. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the CTB are currently "encouraging local governments to nominate roads for byway designation" to help showcase Virginia for the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement.

In addition to inclusion on the "Scenic Roads in Virginia" map and other promotional strategies, scenic highway or byway designation gives localities the opportunity to participate in the National Scenic Highway Program, and may limit placement of outdoor advertising signs. The national program, administered by the Federal Highway Administration, oversees a grant program to assist local efforts in preserving, protecting, interpreting, and promoting the designated byways. Designation does not affect land use controls or limit road improvements. The Code of Virginia provides that when the Commonwealth Transportation Board has designated a highway as a Virginia byway, the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner may acquire by gift or purchase such land, or interests therein, of primary importance for the preservation of natural beauty adjacent to scenic highways. It should be noted, however, that most of the adjacent land along the corridor is owned by either the National Park Service or Newport News Waterworks and thus is already adequately protected from development pressures.

To be considered for scenic highway or byway designation in Virginia, the nominated segment must substantially meet the following criteria:

- The route provides important scenic values and experiences.
 - *This route would traverse watershed and battlefield properties, dense woodlands, and sparsely developed areas, all of which would offer a pleasant “escape” from the more heavily developed and traveled corridors.*
- There is a diversity of experiences, as in transition from one landscape scene to another.
 - *Travelers would pass from the historic Lee Hall and Endview sites through the densely wooded watershed and NPS properties, to the open-field and wooded Yorktown Battelfield areas, and ultimately to historic Yorktown and the Moore House.*
- The route links together or provides access to scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, natural and archeological elements.
 - *The proposed byway would link Lee Hall and Endview in Newport News with historic Yorktown and the significant natural areas in between.*
- The route bypasses major roads or provides opportunities to leave high-speed routes for variety and leisure in motoring. Landscape control or management along the route is feasible.
 - *The route serves as an alternative to the heavily traveled, higher-speed Route 238 and would provide more attractive scenery than the developed areas along the bypassed segments of Route 238.*
- The route allows for additional features that will enhance the motorist’s experience and improve safety.
 - *Because of the public ownership – Newport News Waterworks and National Park Service – for properties along the majority of the route, opportunities would exist for the establishment of interpretive signage at appropriate pull-off points. Speed limits can remain relatively low because of the secondary/non-arterial nature of the majority of the route.*
- Local government(s) has/have initiated zoning or other land-use controls, so as to reasonably protect the aesthetic and cultural value of the highway.
 - *The route traverses areas in York County that are zoned RC (Resource Conservation), which is the County’s lowest intensity zoning designation and was established specifically to protect areas with significant natural, aesthetic, or historic attributes. Also, Cook Road, and Goosley Road be-*

tween Route 17 and Cook Road, are part of the County's Tourist Corridor Management (TCM) overlay district.

The proposed corridor appears to meet these criteria, linking the historic sites of Lee Hall Mansion and Endview Plantation in Newport News with historic Yorktown and the Yorktown Battlefield.

In order for the proposed Byway to be considered for designation and included on the 2007 Scenic Roads Map, the City and the County need to adopt resolutions of support. The Newport News City Council is scheduled to adopt a resolution to nominate the subject roads for inclusion in the Virginia Byway system at its March 14 meeting. A similar resolution is attached for the Board's consideration. If approved by the respective governing bodies, City staff will submit a written request to the DCR and VDOT along with information on nearby cultural or historical sites, ongoing or proposed development, and other documentation to support the designation. The DCR and VDOT will then review the information, visit the site, and make a recommendation for consideration by the CTB. There is no requirement for a public hearing. Once the CTB designates a road corridor as a Virginia Byway, signs will be posted and changes made to all relevant maps.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed road corridor appears to meet the state guidelines for designation as a scenic byway, and such designation could potentially enhance tourism in the County and the surrounding area. There is no expense to the County, and the byway designation, if approved, would have no effect on the zoning and other land use controls or on any future road improvements along the corridor. Therefore, I recommend that the Board adopt proposed Resolution No. R06-22 to nominate the subject roads for designation as a Virginia Byway.

Attachments:

- Letter from Ed Maroney, Newport News City Manager, dated January 19, 2006
- Map of proposed scenic byway
- Proposed Resolution No. R06-22